



# International Union of Operating Engineers

LOCAL 324

CHARTERED FOR THE ENTIRE STATE OF MICHIGAN

March 21, 2012

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The Honorable Kenneth Kurtz

Chairman, House Committee on Families, Children & Seniors

PO Box 30014

Lansing, MI 48914

Dear Representative Kurtz,

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 324 supports Senate Bills 414 and 415. Providing insurance coverage for children with autism, a brain disorder that affects 1 in 110 children, including 15,000 children in Michigan, is the right thing to do.

The cost of lifelong care can be reduced by two-thirds with early diagnosis and intervention. As a self-insured Trust Fund, Local 324 would be happy to make this benefit available to our members, many of whom have children with autism. This is consistent with the Operating Engineers philosophy of commitment to enhance members' quality of life while acknowledging the value and additional financial investment our health care fund would be exposed to.

Autism is not a simple disorder. The treatment is complex and the coverage needs to be comprehensive. The insurance industry's policy group reports that autism insurance coverage will cost less than 1%, a burden the Operating Engineers is willing to bear.

Autism is a devastating yet manageable disease and we fully support Michigan joining with the 27 other states that provide parents with the tools they need to help their children live better lives and contribute to Michigan's future. As mentioned above, we feel that insurance coverage for autism is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

John Hamilton

General Vice President and Business Manager

JHM/cak